



By: CUBuffs.com

Freshman defensive back Chidobe Awuzie (4) made a strong showing in August camp.

Brooks: 'Chido' Looking Like A Name To Remember

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By: B.G. Brooks, Contributing Editor

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BOULDER – At this point in August, before any games are played, introductions are necessary. Sometimes pronunciation guides, too. Said correctly, it is “Chee-do-bay Ahh-woo-zee.”

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And Chidobe Awuzie concedes with a chuckle that he’s heard his name pronounced “100 different ways – all of them wrong.”

Better get used to hearing it and saying it properly; as difficult as it might seem rolling off the tongue now, by late November his could become a household name for Colorado football fans.

Early in preseason camp, Awuzie’s defensive coaches and teammates found a nimble way around getting tripped up in the syllables, tagging him “Chido.”

That’s simple enough, but CU coach Mike MacIntyre has another name for him that’s even easier: playmaker.

“He makes a *lot* of plays,” MacIntyre said after the release of Monday’s game-week depth chart that shows Awuzie as one of only two freshman starters on either side of the ball (the other is middle linebacker Addison Gillam).

Continued “Mac” on “Chido.” “He’s very athletic. If you looked at him you wouldn’t say he looks like a freshman DB, the way he’s built. He’s very, very bright. He’s a 3.5 student coming out of high school and he carries that over to the football field. He picks up things very quick . . . athletically, physically and mentally he’s ready to go.”

Awuzie apparently always has been ready to go at almost any position on the field. At Oak Grove High School in San Jose, Calif., in addition to playing safety, corner and returning punts and kickoffs, he was used at running back, receiver, tight end and occasionally at quarterback.

Recall MacIntyre saying Awuzie makes plays? Consider: As an Oak Grove senior, “Chido” rushed for 14 touchdowns (and 1,285 yards), caught seven TD passes, returned two of his four interceptions for touchdowns, blocked four kicks and forced a pair of fumbles. With a grin, he said he was known as “Mr. Versatility.” No wonder.

When Awuzie arrived on the CU campus with the rest of the freshmen in late June, it didn’t take long for upperclassmen like Paul Vigo to give him the once over, then look again. “I saw him in the summer, coming in and working hard, and said, ‘This kid probably is going to play right now,’” recalled Vigo, a senior captain and starting outside linebacker. “We’d go back and forth (with other upperclassmen), like, ‘Well, we’ve got to see when the pads go on.’ But he’s come along. I’m excited to see what he’s going to do.”

That first look will come Sunday afternoon against Colorado State in the Rocky Mountain Showdown (4 p.m., Sports Authority Field at Mile High). Awuzie will start at nickel back and back up No. 1 left corner Kenneth Crawley.

In his college debut, Awuzie knows the pregame butterflies will be plentiful. "Yeah . . . I ain't going to lie," he said. "In Pop Warner I had butterflies, but never did in high school because I knew what I was doing. Since I'm still kind of learning everything and am a freshman, they're going to be there. I'm excited; everybody always wants to play as a freshman. There's definitely going to be butterflies for the first game, but usually after the first play they're all gone."

Vigo has no doubt that Awuzie will play as he's done throughout August camp. He called Awuzie "a very knowledgeable athlete, a smart kid . . . we ask him to do a lot and he steps up and plays good football. Whatever the coaches have asked him to do, he's done it."

After participating in three summer team camps for MacIntyre and his staff at San Jose State, Awuzie followed MacIntyre and assistant Andy LaRussa to CU as a defensive back. Familiarity with Awuzie from their time together offered LaRussa "an idea of what we were getting. But he's worked really hard to put himself in this position and he's made the plays. That's a testament to him; he did the work and gave himself an opportunity."

In preseason camp and in the player-run practices preceding it, Awuzie turned heads almost from the first snap with his speed and athleticism. "In the beginning of camp I was just trying to learn things, so I was just playing football," he said. "But toward the end of the camp I was learning more and understanding concepts. Now it's coming together – my athleticism and learning the techniques. And I'm playing faster now."

LaRussa calls the 6-foot, 190-pound Awuzie "an extremely good athlete," who also had "a good idea of what to do in the secondary . . . he's played some safety, some corner and had the ball in his hands. He knows the different ways an offense is trying to attack from just having played the position."

Before arriving at CU, Awuzie hadn't played nickel back – the fifth defensive back that now is common against spread-style and passing offenses. But after playing corner and safety in high school, Awuzie called the nickel position "a combination of both. Once you combine those two and understand, you can relate it to a corner and safety. It's just a DB, and it's good to play it as a freshman to learn more. I'm learning a lot playing both positions."

However, he said he's still absorbing CU's 4-3 defensive scheme and the secondary's role in it: "This defense is very crazy. It's something I've never played before. Sometimes it's man, sometimes it's zone. And we press (receivers) different – that's something I've never really played before."

With most of camp behind him, LaRussa feels as comfortable as he can about his portion of the secondary. (Charles Clark coaches the safeties.) "My guys had a great camp, got a lot of reps in," LaRussa said. "We're fortunate to go against a receiver like Paul Richardson every day; he's one of the best in the league and obviously it helps us get better when we go against the best every day. But you can never be satisfied, that's the key."

"I think our guys are ready, but you never ever think things are 100 percent. You keep working and fine-tuning and making sure it's all ready to go. The focus of the guys and their intensity doing things – that encourages you."

Another source of encouragement: young guys like Chidobe Awuzie. Remember the name; chances are good you'll hear it frequently over the next four years.

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Colorado Buffaloes Football

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Football: CU Buffs' D.D. Goodson finally gets his chance

By Brian Howell Buffzone.com Boulder Daily Camera

Posted:

Buffzone.com

So far, D.D. Goodson's football career at Colorado has consisted of a few position switches, not a lot of game time and very little impact on the field.

The junior from Rosenberg, Tex., could be on the verge of something big, though.

Goodson heads into Sunday's season opener against Colorado State as the starting slot receiver for the Buffaloes. In that role, he's made big play after big play during training camp.

"I finally found a position that I felt like I'm good at and I feel like I can make plays for my team," said Goodson, who is 5-foot-6, 170 pounds.

Goodson was a dangerous all-purpose weapon at Lamar Consolidated High School, whether it was catching the ball, running it or returning kicks.

He came to Colorado as a tailback, but during his freshman year in 2011, the Buffs were so depleted in the secondary that former head coach Jon Embree moved him to cornerback. He played four games at corner, two of those starts -- against national powers Oregon and Southern Cal.

"Initially I was like, 'Uh, I'm an offensive guy,' but I wanted to try to help the team," Goodson said. "It was my first time playing (defensive back) and I definitely felt out of place. I was thrown into the fire. But, you live and you learn."

A year ago, the Buffs were deeper at corner, so they moved him back to tailback. He played very little, though, rushing for 18 yards on five attempts.

While his first two seasons didn't go as he hoped they would, Goodson said he learned a lot by playing at corner and running back.

Then, the arrival of new head coach Mike MacIntyre gave Goodson a fresh start and he has taken full advantage of it. MacIntyre moved him to receiver, and during the four main scrimmages of spring, Goodson led the team with 13 receptions for 169 yards and three touchdowns.

"It was really important to me (to play well in the spring) because I let (the coaches) know before hand, I told them I could catch and I could make plays, so I had to back that up," he said. "At the same time, the spot was open for tryouts, so I took advantage."

Goodson has continued to impress his coaches and teammates during training camp this month, and he's now considered to be potentially one of CU's biggest weapons this season.

He got here by keeping his focus and making the most out of every situation presented to him during the previous two years.

"It's a lot of learning experiences," he said. "They all help you on the field, they all help you with

the speed of the game. I felt like I got better as a football player at each position."

Barely noticed out of high school (CU and Texas State were the only teams to offer scholarships) and lost in the shuffle during the past two years, Goodson is now eager to show what he's learned and prove he can be an asset to the Buffs.

"In order to shine, you have to grind," he said. "That's the thing I keep in the back of my head. Any time I'm doing a play, any time I'm working out, I just keep that in my head. Regardless, it's going to come."

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Football: CU Buffs' Mike MacIntyre has high expectations for team

By Brian Howell Buffzone.com Boulder Daily Camera

Posted:

Buffzone.com

Mike MacIntyre isn't making any bold predictions.

Colorado's new head football coach hasn't claimed his team can win 10 games this year. He hasn't guaranteed a bowl game appearance.

At Thursday's annual kickoff luncheon at Balch Fieldhouse, however, MacIntyre made it clear the Buffaloes will do everything in their power to achieve those things.

Speaking to boosters, administrators, fellow coaches, CU athletes and community members, MacIntyre said the Buffs' expectations are high this season. The Buffs open the season at 4 p.m. Sunday against Colorado State at Sports Authority Field at Mile High.

"When I talked to (CU president) Bruce Benson, I asked him one question on the interview," MacIntyre said. "I asked Bruce, 'Bruce, what do you expect out of the football program?' I asked (chancellor Phil DiStefano) the same thing. They said, '12-0. Win them all.'

"I said, 'OK, that's what I wanted to hear.' "

Coming off a 1-11 season, it's not likely the Buffs can make that quantum leap to 12-0 this season. But, MacIntyre said that's the mindset CU has to have as it goes forward.

"They understand you've got to build it, but that should be your goal," he said. "That's what we're going for."

Football: CU Buffs healthy going into season

By Brian Howell Buffzone.com Boulder Daily Camera

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Like most football teams around the country, Colorado didn't go through training camp without some bumps and bruises. The Buffs lost a couple of players to severe injuries (kicker Justin Castor will miss the season with a hip injury and running back Josh Ford will miss a large chunk of the year with an ankle injury), but beyond that, CU goes into Sunday's opener relatively healthy.

"I feel good about the health of our team," Mike MacIntyre said. "We didn't have any (injured) knees or really bad hamstrings that are lingering or anything like that, so I feel good about the health of our team at this point."

MacIntyre is also encouraged by the overall condition of his team, including the defensive line. It was well documented that the defensive line unit was charged with losing weight and getting in shape.

The defensive linemen will weigh in on Friday, but MacIntyre expects good results. He pointed out one of the linemen who "went from 336 to, he was 299 the other day."

"We'll see if he eats a pizza tonight, but that's phenomenal, the effort they've shown," MacIntyre said. "I don't see them huffing and puffing and basically trying to survive practice; I see them getting better in practice. That'll make a big difference (on game day)."

MacIntyre didn't reveal which player had dropped from 336 to 299, but it could be sophomore Josh Tupou, who was at around 330 pounds at the start of the summer.

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Football: CU Buffs' Mike MacIntyre hears praise for colleagues

By Brian Howell Buffzone.com Boulder Daily Camera

Posted:

Buffzone.com

During Thursday's luncheon, Mike MacIntyre spent the first portion of his time on stage praising several of the people he has met since arriving at CU, including men's basketball coach Tad Boyle, whom he called, "A very good friend of mine."

"His friendship has meant more than he even knows," MacIntyre said.

MacIntyre also said he's been impressed so far with new athletic director Rick George, who started his job on Aug. 12.

"As soon as it was announced that Rick George was hired, I got a phone call, literally 10 minutes later, from a man named Archie Manning," MacIntyre said. "That's Peyton and Eli's dad, who I've known for a long time. He said, 'Y'all just hit a grand slam.'"

"I'm excited about Rick being here."

Notable

This has been a good week of practice, MacIntyre said. "The last four or five practices, from the third teamers to the first teamers, we've kind of just clicked," he said. "Practices have been smoother." ... In their last two openers, against CSU in 2012 and Hawaii in 2011, the Buffs have been outgained 290-75 on the ground.

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CU Buffs have seven freshmen in position for playing time Sunday

By John Henderson The Denver Post The Denver Post

Posted:

DenverPost.com

BOULDER — As many as seven Colorado freshmen could get playing time when the Buffaloes play their season opener Sunday against Colorado State at Sports Authority Field at Mile High in Denver.

Only one, true freshman middle linebacker Addison Gillam, will be a starter. But others listed second on the depth chart are true freshmen Devin Ross at wide receiver, Derek McCartney at defensive end, Kenneth Olugbode at inside linebacker, Chidobe Awuzie at cornerback and Sefo Liufau at quarterback and redshirt freshman Alex Kelley at guard. Awuzie is a nickel back and a rising star in the secondary. Liufau probably will play only if starting quarterback Connor Wood gets hurt or is ineffective.

Buffs healthy. Other than the loss of reserve tailback Josh Ford to an ankle injury, the Buffaloes emerged from preseason camp relatively healthy.

"Anybody you lose, you don't want to lose," said coach Mike MacIntyre. "But we didn't have any knees or really bad hamstrings. I feel good about the health of our team."

Freshman wide receiver Jeff Thomas has been slowed by a hamstring injury and is listed third string.

Footnotes. MacIntyre told his defensive linemen last spring to lose a collective 100 pounds. He will find out Friday whether they did it. "We're weighing them in," McIntyre said. "One of them is even under 300. He was 336 and he was 299 the other day. We'll see if he eats a pizza tonight. Still, that's phenomenal, the effort they showed." McIntyre will reveal the names and their weight loss Friday. ... CSU is favored by 2½ points in Sunday's game, the first time the Rams have been favored in the Rocky Mountain Showdown since they were two-point favorites in 2006, according to The Gold Sheet in Las Vegas. They won 14-10 that year in Denver.

Rocky Mountain Showdown ticket sales can't gauge soul of CU-CSU series

By Christopher Dempsey *The Denver Post* *The Denver Post*
Posted:

DenverPost.com

Ticket sales are a big deal and a barometer.

And a smack-talking point.

Which, right now, has become loathsome.

With three days until the Rocky Mountain Showdown, the conversation has been inevitably hijacked and driven down the same-old tired road, questioning just how many people care about the CU vs. CSU rivalry game.

The conclusion, based on struggling ticket sales: Not many.

The actual answer: A lot.

Though you'd be hard-pressed to believe it given the current opinion-shaping climate, this isn't a CU/CSU issue. There isn't an overflowing number of fans anywhere for any team on any level that jumps at the chance to spend hard-earned money on a product they don't feel good about. Especially when they can just watch it on television.

The NFL is the most popular league in America, and it has cities where games are blacked out due to poor fan attendance. It is in the fight of its life to continue to get fans to stadium turnstiles in droves through facilities upgrades and improvements. Yet there is never a question as to whether NFL fans care or not, because clearly they do, even if sagging ticket sales contradict that point.

The players and coaches in the Rocky Mountain Showdown should not have to feel as if this rivalry doesn't matter, because it does. We read it/see it/hear it in the quotes of players raised in the state every year. But a plethora of us in the media, across all formats, who did not grow up in the state or attend either of the universities are the ones pushing the storm clouds, messily applying a national argument to a local rivalry.

A rivalry that, yes, matters.

The groundswell from those who want the game to return to the campus sites simply needs to be patient. It's inevitable. The contract for the Rocky Mountain Showdown in Denver runs through 2019, but there's not much of a decision there. It's going back to campus — at latest — when Colorado State's new football stadium opens for business. Even if they'd decline restructuring the deal to move back to campus in the short term, the Rams will most certainly want their home game there in the new digs. CU has pretty much always wanted its home games at Folsom Field, so I'd guess when CSU's stadium opens up we'll never see this game return to Denver again.

To that I say: a) Too bad, and b) But I understand.

The atmosphere for this game was never better than when 70,000-plus fans turned the Broncos' pro-football venue into the ultimate green-black-and-two-golds college party. Bands and fans and football mixing and matching, and sometimes mixing it up, all in the spirit of rooting for their team. The stadium rocked.

Neither Folsom Field nor Name Your Football Stadium Here in Fort Collins can match that.

And maybe that's OK. Maybe that gets fans in the stands during a period when both programs are finding their way through the forest back to big-time football.

But the heartbeat of the series? Strong.

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